REMARKS

This Application has been carefully reviewed in light of the Office Action mailed February 14, 2001. Applicants have amended the specification to update information concerning related applications and to correct various typographical and grammatical errors. Applicants have cancelled claims 8-9 and 13-14 without prejudice or disclaimer. Applicants have also amended claims 1-7, 10-12, and 15-20 and added new Claims 21-48 to further clarify, more particularly point out, and more distinctly claim at least some of the various patentable distinctions over the prior art previously present in Applicants' claims. All new claims are fully supported by the original specification. These changes were not made in relation to patentability. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and favorable action.

Objections

The examiner objects to several references to application serial numbers with blank lines. Applicants have amended the specification to update information concerning related applications.

Claims 1-7, 15, and 20 are Patentable

The Examiner rejects Claims 1-9, 15, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,630,069 to Flores et al. ("*Flores*").

Flores discloses a tool for conducting business process analysis, design, and documentation. (Abstract). In particular, *Flores* discloses a component of a workflow system for creating workflow maps of business processes. (Column 3, Lines 18-21). Every mapped workflow, according to *Flores*, has a customer role—the person for whom work is done—and a performer role—the person responsible for completing the work and declaring when the work is done. (Column 1, Lines 21-33). For example, as explained in *Flores*, in the sentence "John asked Frank to prepare the report and deliver it by noon on Friday," John is the customer for the workflow and Frank is the performer. (Column 1, Lines 40-56). A workflow can also have observers. (Column 1, Lines 24-25). Observers of workflows are persons who take no direct action; they usually observe for management or training purposes. (Column 1, Lines 57-58; Column 8, Lines 1-5).

In *Flores*, a workflow is shown as an elliptical loop with arrows shown in a clockwise direction wherein each quadrant of the ellipse signifies different phases of the workflow. (Column 3, Lines 24-27). These phases include, in the following order, a proposal phase, an agreement phase, a performance phase, and a satisfaction phase. (Column 3, Lines 27-43). During the proposal phase, a request is made of the prospective performer by a customer or an offer to a customer is made by a prospective performer. (Column 3, Lines 27-30). During the agreement phase, the offer from the proposal phase is accepted by the customer or the request from the proposal phase is agreed to by the performer and conditions of satisfaction are identified. (Column 3, Lines 30-33). According to *Flores*, conditions of satisfaction can be negotiated by the customer and performer until an agreement is reached. (Column 3, Lines 33-36). During the performance phase, the performer undertakes to meet the agreed to or accepted conditions of satisfaction. (Column 3, Lines 36-38). During the satisfaction phase, the customer determines whether the conditions of satisfaction have been met by the performer and, if so, declares satisfaction. (Column 3, Lines 40-43).

Independent Claim 1 is Patentable

Independent Claim 1 of the present application, as amended, recites:

> A computer-implemented process for managing a distributed workflow, operable to:
>
> store a set of predefined functions for a workflow that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes; and
>
> automatically interact with the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to perform the predefined functions.

Flores does not disclose, teach, or suggest these limitations, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference.

For example, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "set of predefined functions for a workflow" as recited in Claim 1. *Flores* merely discloses a business process map that includes graphical representations of workflows that are graphically connected by links associating parameters with the workflows. (Column 3, Lines 44-56). In the depicted workflows, a customer makes a request of a performer (or a performer makes an offer to a

customer), conditions of satisfaction are negotiated until an agreement is reached, and the request is agreed to (or the offer accepted). (Column 3, Lines 27-36). Since the work performed in each of these workflows is requested (or proposed), negotiated, and agreed to (or accepted), such work is by no means "predefined" as recited in Claim 1. Therefore, even assuming for the sake of argument that the work performed in each of these workflows could be properly viewed as functions, *Flores* still would not disclose, teach, or suggest a "set of predefined functions for a workflow" as recited in Claim 1.

Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a set of predefined functions for a workflow "that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 1. Instead, *Flores* discloses that the work in each of the workflows graphically represented in the business process map described above is performed by *one person*—the performer. (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 36-38). If not definitively limiting *Flores* to workflows wherein work is performed by one person, these portions of *Flores* at least teach away from multiple distributed entities performing work in a workflow and from an entity other than a person performing such work. Therefore, even assuming again for the sake of argument that the work performed in each of the workflows depicted in the business process map of *Flores* could be properly viewed as functions, *Flores* still would not disclose, teach, or suggest a set of predefined functions for a workflow "that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 1.

Furthermore, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process for managing a distributed workflow" that is operable to "store a set of predefined functions for a workflow that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes" and "automatically interact with the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to perform the predefined functions" as recited in Claim 1. *Flores* instead discloses that the workflows graphically represented in the business process map described above each involve but two persons—a customer and a performer—who take direct action. (Column 1, Lines 26-33). Nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process for managing a distributed workflow," much less "a computer-implemented process for managing a distributed workflow" that is operable to "store a set of predefined functions for

a workflow that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes" and "automatically interact with the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to perform the predefined functions."

For at least these reasons, Claim 1 is patentably distinct from *Flores*, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claim 1 along with all claims that depend on Claim 1.

Dependent Claims 2-4 are Patentable

In addition to being dependent on Claim 1, which Applicants have shown to be allowable, dependent Claims 2-4 contain further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record.

For example, Claim 2 recites that the recited set of predefined functions are "operable to generate a workflow between a plurality of enterprises."

Flores does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "workflow between a plurality of enterprises" as recited in Claim 2. *Flores* instead merely discloses workflows having customer roles and performer roles. (Column 1, Lines 21-33). *Flores* provides no disclosure, teaching, or suggestion that these roles may be associated with different enterprises. In fact, *Flores* teaches away from this possibility in the examples relied on to explain this concept. As a first example, *Flores* states that, in the sentence "John asked Frank to prepare the report and deliver it by noon on Friday," John is the customer and Frank is the performer. As a second (and final) example, *Flores* states that, in the sentence "John proposed to prepare the report and deliver it by noon on Friday for Frank," John is the performer and Frank is the customer. Both of these examples involve persons designated only by their first names and center around an activity (preparing a report) common within a single enterprise. If not definitively limiting *Flores* to workflows performed within a single enterprise, these portions of *Flores* at least teach away from "a workflow between a plurality of enterprises" as recited in Claim 2.

As shown above, *Flores* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest the recited "set of predefined functions." Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest that the recited set of predefined functions "are operable to generate" a workflow between a plurality of enterprises as recited in Claim 2. *Flores* instead discloses a workflow initiating other workflows from one of its phases. (Column 3, Lines 57-58). These phases, according to *Flores*, involve requests (or proposals), negotiation, and agreement (or acceptance) between two persons. Therefore, even assuming for the sake of argument that initiating a workflow could be properly viewed as "generat[ing] a workflow," as recited in Claim 2, *Flores* still would not disclose, teach, or suggest that the set of predefined functions "are operable to generate a workflow between a plurality of enterprises" as recited in Claim 2. *Flores* further discloses a workflow analyst that allows creation of workflow maps of business processes, which maps are an input to another component of a workflow system. However, these portions of *Flores* merely disclose ways of graphically representing workflows that involve work being requested (or proposed), negotiated, and agreed to (or accepted) between two persons, and have no correspondence to the recited predefined functions being "operable to generate a workflow between a plurality of enterprises" as recited in Claim 2.

As another example, Claim 3 recites that "the set of predefined functions are operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to a monitoring system." As shown above, *Flores* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest the recited "set of predefined functions." *Flores* also does not disclose, teach, or suggest that the set of predefined functions "are operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow" as recited in Claim 3. *Flores* merely discloses that a workflow-enabled application interfaces to a workflow server via messaging, database, or inter-process communications. (Column 5, Lines 9-13). Nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach or suggest communication by the recited set of predefined functions in the manner recited in Claim 3.

Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest that the recited set of predefined functions are operable to transmit data "associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 3. Although *Flores* discloses a workflow-enabled

application, (Column 5, Lines 9-13) as discussed above, and an observer that monitors the workflow for management, training, or to fulfill organizational concerns, (Column 8, Lines 1-5) nowhere does *Flores* disclose transmitting data "associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 3. *Flores* instead discloses that the work in a graphically represented workflow is handled by *one person*—the performer. (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 36-38). If not definitively limiting *Flores* to workflows wherein work is performed by one person, these portions of *Flores* at least teach away from multiple distributed entities performing work in a workflow and from an entity other than a person performing such work. Therefore, even assuming for the sake of argument that the work performed in each of the workflows depicted in the business process map of *Flores* could be properly viewed as the operation of a workflow, *Flores* still would not disclose, teach, or suggest the recited "set of predefined functions . . . operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 3.

Furthermore, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest that the recited set of predefined functions are operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes "to a monitoring system" as recited in Claim 3. While *Flores* discloses workflow observers that monitor workflows for different organization-related purposes, these observers, according to *Flores*, are persons. (Column 8, Lines 1-5). Nowhere does *Flores* suggest that these observers may be part of a "monitoring system." Accordingly, *Flores* does not disclose the recited "set of predefined functions . . . operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to a monitoring system."

As another example, Claim 4 recites that the recited set of predefined functions "are operable to deploy the workflow to the distributed nodes." *Flores* discloses one person requesting another person to perform work (Column 3, Lines 27-30) and the other person undertaking to perform the work, (Column 3, Lines 36-38) but these portions of *Flores* fail to disclose, teach, or suggest the recited "set of predefined functions . . . operable to deploy a workflow." *Flores* further discloses a workflow initiating other workflows from one of its

phases, (Column 3, Lines 57-58) but these phases, according to *Flores*, involve requests (or proposals), negotiation, and agreement (or acceptance) between two persons—a customer and a performer. (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 27-36). Therefore, even assuming for the sake of argument that initiating a workflow according to *Flores* could be properly viewed as deploying a workflow, these portions of *Flores* still would not disclose, teach, or suggest a "set of predefined functions . . . operable to deploy the workflow" as recited in Claim 4. Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest that the recited set of predefined functions are operable to deploy the workflow "to the distributed nodes," as recited in Claim 4. As discussed above, *Flores* instead discloses *one person* undertaking to perform work requested by another person, (Column 3, Lines 27-30; Column 3, Lines 36-38) which teaches directly away from a workflow being deployed "to the distributed nodes" as recited in Claim 4.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of dependent Claims 2-4.

Independent Claim 5 is Patentable

Independent Claim 5, as amended, recites:

> A computer-implemented process for generating a collaboration between a plurality of enterprises, operable to:
> receive a preliminary collaboration from a first enterprise;
> automatically transmit the preliminary collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined second enterprise for review;
> receive a response to the preliminary collaboration from the second enterprise;
> automatically transmit the response of the second enterprise from the computer-implemented process to the first enterprise for review; and
> receive a response to the response of the second enterprise from the first enterprise, the responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first and second enterprises.

Flores does not disclose, teach, or suggest these limitations, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference.

For example, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "computer-implemented process for generating a collaboration . . . operable to: receive a preliminary collaboration from a first enterprise; automatically transmit the preliminary collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined second enterprise for review; receive a response to the preliminary collaboration from the second enterprise; automatically transmit the response of the second enterprise from the computer-implemented process to the first enterprise for review; and receive a response to the response of the second enterprise from the first enterprise" as recited in Claim 5. Although *Flores* discloses a workflow having a proposal phase and an agreement phase, (Column 3, Lines 27-36) these phases involve two persons—a customer and a performer—reaching an agreement over work to be performed, as discussed above. Accordingly, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "computer-implemented process" receiving and transmitting a preliminary collaboration or receiving and transmitting a response from an enterprise. In fact, *Flores* teaches away from this concept by disclosing that the participants in the proposal and agreement phase of a workflow are persons.

Moreover, *Flores* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest the computer-implemented process being operable to receive a preliminary collaboration "from a first enterprise," automatically transmit the preliminary collaboration from the computer-implemented process "to a predefined second enterprise" for review, receive a response to the preliminary collaboration "from the second enterprise," automatically transmit the response "of the second enterprise" from the computer-implemented process "to the first enterprise" for review, and receive a response to the response "of the second enterprise from the first enterprise" as recited in Claim 5. As discussed above, nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest interaction between enterprises, much less the reviews and responses by enterprises concerning a preliminary collaboration as specifically recited in Claim 5.

Flores also fails to disclose, teach, or suggest the "responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first and second enterprises" as recited in Claim 5. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses an agreement phase of a workflow involving two persons,

during which phase an offer is accepted (or a request agreed to) and conditions of satisfaction are identified or negotiated until an agreement over work to be performed by one of the persons is reached. (Column 3, Lines 30-36). Nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest the "responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration" or such a final collaboration being "optimized for the first and second enterprises" as recited in Claim 5.

For at least these reasons, Claim 5 is patentably distinct from *Flores*, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claim 5 along with all claims that depend on Claim 5.

Dependent Claims 6-7 are Patentable

In addition to being dependent on Claim 5, which Applicants have shown to be allowable, dependent Claims 6-7 contain further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record.

For example, Claim 6 recites that "the response of the first enterprise comprises a comment on the preliminary collaboration." As another example, Claim 7 recites that "the response of the first enterprise comprises a modification of the preliminary collaboration." *Flores* merely discloses a phase of a workflow involving negotiation between two persons of conditions of satisfaction for work to be performed by one of the persons (Column 3, Lines 33-36) and various labels for actions in one workflow that cause actions in another workflow. (Column 10, Lines 15-18). Nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest "the response of the first enterprise comprises a comment on the preliminary collaboration" or "the response of the first enterprise comprises a modification of the preliminary collaboration" as recited in Claims 6 and 7, respectively. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of dependent Claims 6-7.

Independent Claim 15 is Patentable

Independent Claim 15, as amended, recites:

> A computer-implemented process for deploying a collaboration generated by a first enterprise to a plurality of other enterprises, operable to:
> receive a final collaboration approved by first, second, and third enterprises;
> automatically transmit a predefined first part of the collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined second enterprise for operation at the second enterprise; and
> automatically transmit a predefined second part of the collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined third enterprise for operation at the third enterprise.

Flores does not disclose, teach, or suggest these limitations, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference.

For example, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process" that receives a final collaboration approved by first, second, and third enterprises, automatically transmits a predefined first part of the collaboration to a predefined second enterprise for operation at the second enterprise, and automatically transmits a predefined second part of the collaboration to a predefined third enterprise for operation at the third enterprise as recited in Claim 15. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses a workflow having a proposal phase, an agreement phase, and a performance phase that involve two persons reaching an agreement over work to be performed and one of the persons undertaking to perform the work. (Column 3, Lines 27-38). Accordingly, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process" as recited in Claim 15.

Moreover, *Flores* fails to disclose a computer-implemented process that automatically transmits a predefined first part of the collaboration "to a predefined second enterprise for operation at the second enterprise" and automatically transmits a predefined second part of the collaboration "to a predefined third enterprise for operation at the third enterprise" as recited in Claim 15. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses workflows having customer roles and performer roles, (Column 1, Lines 21-33) providing no disclosure, teaching, or suggestion that these roles may be associated with different enterprises. In

addition, *Flores* discloses that the work in a workflow is handled by *one person*—the performer. (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 36-38). If not definitively limiting *Flores* to workflows wherein work is performed by one person not associated with an enterprise, these portions of *Flores* at least teach away from operation of a workflow at more than one enterprise.

Furthermore, as discussed above, even assuming for the sake of argument that the roles disclosed in *Flores* could be properly viewed as "enterprises," *Flores* merely discloses that two persons—a customer and a performer—take any kind of direct action. (Column 1, Lines 26-33). *Flores* discloses an observer role but, as the Examiner has noted, *Flores* explicitly states that observers of workflows take no direct action. (Column 1, Lines 56-57). Therefore, *Flores* teaches directly away from a third enterprise being involved in approval or operation of a collaboration as recited in Claim 15.

For at least these reasons, Claim 15 is patentably distinct from *Flores*, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 15 along with all claims that depend on Claim 15.

Independent Claim 20 is Patentable

Independent Claim 20, as amended, recites:

> A computer-implemented process for monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises, operable to:
>
> receive a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data;
>
> automatically transmit the first set of data from the computer-implemented process to a monitoring system in response to the querying of the first node;
>
> receive a second predefined set of data associated with operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise, the second set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the second node for the second set of data; and

automatically transmit the second set of data from the computer-implemented process to the monitoring system in response to the querying of the second node.

Flores does not disclose, teach, or suggest these limitations, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference.

For example, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "monitoring system" as recited in Claim 20. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses persons who monitor workflows for different organization-related purposes. (Column 8, Lines 1-5). Accordingly, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a "monitoring system" as recited in Claim 20.

Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a computer-implemented process for monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises that receives "a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected from an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data" and automatically transmits "the first set of data" to a monitoring system, as recited in Claim 20. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses a workflow having four phases involving two persons reaching an agreement over work to be performed by one of the persons, that person performing the work, and the other person determining whether the work has been performed satisfactorily. (Column 1, Lines 21-33; Column 1, Lines 26-27; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 27-43) . Nowhere does *Flores* even suggest "a first predefined set of data" as recited in Claim 20.

Moreover, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest a computer-implemented process for monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises that receives "a second predefined set of data associated with operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise, the second set of data having been collected from an automatic query of the second node for the second set of data" and automatically transmits "the second set of data" to the monitoring system as recited in Claim 20. As discussed above, *Flores* discloses that work in a workflow is performed by *one person*, (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 36-38) teaching

directly away from "operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise." In addition, as discussed above, *Flores* fails to even suggest a "second set of predefined data" as recited in Claim 20.

Furthermore, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process for monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises" that receives a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected from an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data, automatically transmits the first set of data to a monitoring system in response to the querying of the first node, receives a second predefined set of data associated with operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise, the second set of data having been collected from an automatic query of the second node for the second set of data, and automatically transmits the second set of data to the monitoring system in response to the querying of the second node as recited in Claim 20. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses persons monitoring workflows for different organization-related purposes, (Column 8, Lines 1-5) which teaches away from "a computer-implemented process" as recited in Claim 20. However, even if the observers disclosed in *Flores* could be properly viewed as Applicants' computer-implemented process, which they cannot, nowhere does *Flores* even suggest any of the functionality of Applicants' computer-implemented process. As just one example, *Flores* fails to disclose that its workflow observers "receive a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected from an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data."

For at least these reasons, Claim 20 is patentably distinct from *Flores*, whether *Flores* is considered alone or in combination with any other cited reference. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 20.

Claims 10-14 and 16-19 are Patentable

The Examiner rejects Claims 10-14 and 16-19 as being unpatentable over *Flores* in view of *The Integrated Supply Chain Management System* by Fox et al. ("*Fox*").

Fox discloses a planning/scheduling function that the authors view as the "conductor" that "orchestrates" the behavior of supply chain agents. (Page 3, Lines 3-5). According to *Fox*, the nature of the reasoning performed by other agents will change and, with more sophisticated planning/scheduling algorithms, the overall quality of supply change management will increase. (Page 3, Lines 5-7).

Dependent Claim 10 is Patentable

Dependent Claim 10 of the present application, as amended, recites:

> The process of Claim 5, further operable to;
> receive an approval from each of the first and second enterprises for a collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and reflecting the responses of the first and second enterprises;
> subsequent to receiving the approvals from the first and second enterprises, automatically transmit the collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined third enterprise for review;
> receive a response to the collaboration from the third enterprise;
> automatically transmit the response of the third enterprise from the computer-implemented process to the first and second enterprises for review; and
> receive responses to the response of the third enterprise from the first and second enterprises, the responses of the first, second, and third enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises.

Even assuming for the sake of argument that it was possible to combine *Flores* and *Fox* in some manner, which is by no means clear, neither *Flores*, *Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests these limitations.

For example, neither *Flores*, *Fox,* nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests a "computer-implemented process . . . operable to: . . . subsequent to receiving the approvals from the first and second enterprises, automatically transmit the collaboration from the computer-implemented process to a predefined third enterprise for review; receive a

response to the collaboration from the third enterprise; automatically transmit the response of the third enterprise from the computer-implemented process to the first and second enterprises for review; and receive responses to the response of the third enterprise from the first and second enterprises" as recited in Claim 10. As discussed above, *Flores* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest "enterprises" as recited in Applicant's claims. *Flores* merely discloses two persons—a customer and a performer—taking any kind of direct action. (Column 1, Lines 26-33). *Flores* discloses a workflow observer but, as the Examiner has noted, *Flores* explicitly states that observers of workflows take no direct action. (Column 1, Lines 56-57). Therefore, *Flores* teaches away from a third enterprise being involved in any kind of review of a collaboration. *Fox* fails to account for the deficiencies of *Flores* in this regard in that *Fox* merely discloses a planning/scheduling function that the authors of that article view as the "conductor" that "orchestrates" the behavior of supply chain agents. (Page 3, Lines 3-5). Nowhere does *Fox* disclose any of the limitations of Claim 10.

Moreover, neither *Flores*, *Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests "the responses of the first, second, and third enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises." As discussed above, nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest the "responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration" or a "final collaboration . . . optimized for . . . first and second enterprises." And since, as further discussed above, *Flores* does not disclose Applicants' "third enterprise," *Flores* necessarily fails to disclose, teach, or suggest a third enterprise responding to the collaboration approved by the first and second enterprises or a "final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises." Therefore, *Flores* fails to disclose these limitations of Claim 10. *Fox* also fails to account for the deficiencies of *Flores* in this regard.

For at least these reasons, Claim 10 is patentably distinct from *Flores* and *Fox*, whether considered individually or in combination. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request allowance of Claim 10 along with all claims that depend on Claim 10.

Dependent Claims 11-12 are Patentable

In addition to depending on dependent Claim 10, which Applicants have shown to be allowable, dependent Claims 11-12 contain further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record.

For example, Claim 11 recites that "the response of the third enterprise comprises a comment on the collaboration," and Claim 12 recites that "the response of the third enterprise comprises a modification to the collaboration." As discussed above, *Flores* does not disclose, teach, or suggest Applicants' third enterprise. Therefore, *Flores* necessarily fails to disclose that "the response of the third enterprise comprises a comment on the collaboration" or that "the response of the third enterprise comprises a modification to the collaboration." However, even if *Flores* disclosed Applicants' third enterprise, which it does not, *Flores* would still fail to disclose "a comment on the collaboration" or "a modification to the collaboration" from any entity. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses a phase of a workflow involving negotiation between two persons over conditions of satisfaction for work to be performed by one of the persons (Column 3, Lines 33-36) and various labels for actions in one workflow that cause actions in another workflow. (Column 10, Lines 15-18).

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request allowance of dependent Claims 10-12.

Dependent Claim 16 is Patentable

In addition to depending on independent Claim 15, which Applicants have shown to be allowable, dependent Claim 16 contains further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. Claim 16 recites the computer-implemented process of Claim 15 being "further operable to: request an approval from the second enterprise for operation of the first part of the collaboration at a node of the second enterprise; and request an approval from the third enterprise for operation of the second part of the collaboration at a node of the third enterprise." Neither *Flores*, *Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests these limitations.

For example, neither *Flores, Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests "a computer-implemented process" that requests an approval from the second enterprise for operation of the first part of the collaboration at a node of the second enterprise and requests an approval from the third enterprise for operation of the second part of the collaboration at a node of the third enterprise as recited in Claim 16. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses a workflow having a proposal phase, agreement phase, and performance phase that involve two persons reaching an agreement over work to be performed and one of the persons undertaking to perform the work. (Column 3, Lines 27-38). Nowhere does *Flores* disclose, teach, or suggest "a computer-implemented process" as recited in Claim 16. *Fox* fails to account for the deficiencies of *Flores* in this regard.

Moreover, neither *Flores, Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests a computer-implemented process that requests an approval "from the second enterprise" for operation of the first part of the collaboration "at a node of the second enterprise" as recited in Claim 16. As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses workflows having customer roles and performer roles, (Column 1, Lines 21-33) providing no disclosure, teaching, or suggestion that these roles may be associated with different enterprises. In addition, *Flores* discloses that the work in a workflow is handled by *one person*—the performer. (Column 1, Lines 21-22; Column 1, Lines 31-33; Column 3, Lines 36-38). If not definitively limiting *Flores* to workflows wherein work is performed by one person not associated with an enterprise, these portions of *Flores* at least teach away from operation of a workflow at an enterprise or at a node of more than one enterprise as recited in Claim 16. *Fox* also fails to account for the deficiencies of *Flores* in this regard.

Furthermore, neither *Flores, Fox*, nor their proposed combination discloses, teaches, or suggests a computer-implemented process that requests an approval "from the third enterprise" for operation of the second part of the collaboration at a node of the third enterprise" as recited in Claim 16. *Flores* merely discloses that two persons—a customer and a performer—take any kind of direct action. (Column 1, Lines 26-33). *Flores* discloses an observer role but, as the Examiner has noted, *Flores* explicitly states that observers of workflows take no direct action. (Column 1, Lines 56-57). Therefore, *Flores* teaches directly

away from a third enterprise being involved in approving operation of a collaboration as recited in Claim 16. As further discussed above, *Fox* fails to account for the deficiencies of *Flores* in this regard in that *Fox* merely discloses a planning/scheduling function that the authors of that article view as the "conductor" that "orchestrates" the behavior of supply chain agents. (Page 3, Lines 3-5).

For at least these reasons, Claim 16 is patentably distinct from *Flores*, *Fox*, and their proposed combination. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 16 along with all claims that depend on Claims 16.

Dependent Claims 17-19 are Patentable

In addition to depending on dependent Claim 16, which Applicants have shown to be allowable, dependent Claims 17-19 contains further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record.

For example, dependent Claim 17 recites the computer-implemented process of Claim 16 "further operable to, in response to receiving the approval from the second enterprise, notify the third enterprise of the approval." *Flores*, as discussed above, merely discloses persons who monitor workflows for different organization-related purposes. (Column 8, Lines 1-5). Accordingly, *Flores* fails to disclose the limitations of Claim 17.

As another example, dependent Claim 18 recites the computer-implemented process of Claim 16 "further operable to, in response to receiving the approvals from the second and third enterprises, transmit a signal to the second and third enterprises to operate the first and second parts of the collaboration, respectively." As another example, dependent Claim 19 recites the computer-implemented process of Claim 16 "further operable to, in response to receiving approvals to operate the collaboration from all enterprises to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted, transmit a signal to all of the enterprises to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted to operate the corresponding transmitted parts of the collaboration." As discussed above, *Flores* merely discloses that a workflow-enabled application interfaces to a workflow server via messaging, database, or inter-process

communications. (Column 5, Lines 9-13). Accordingly, *Flores* fails to disclose the limitations of Claims 18 or 19.

Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of dependent Claims 17-19.

New Claims 21-48 are Patentable

New Claims 21-24, 25-30, 38-42, and 44 are directed to methods and recite limitations similar to those of Claims 1-4, 5-7, 10-12, 15-19, and 20 and are allowable for at least the same reasons. Claim 48 is directed to a system in "means plus function" format, recites limitations similar to those of Claim 5, and is allowable for at least the same reasons.

In addition to being dependent on Claim 25, which is allowable as discussed above, new Claims 31-37 contain further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request allowance of new Claims 31-37.

In addition to being dependent on dependent Claim 42, which is allowable as discussed above, new Claim 43 contains further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request allowance of new Claim 43.

In addition to being dependent on Claim 44, which is allowable as discussed above, new Claims 45-47 contain further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. Accordingly, for at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request allowance of new Claims 45-47.

Conclusion

Applicants have made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. For the foregoing reasons, and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicants respectfully request full allowance of all pending claims.

If the Examiner believes that a telephone conference would advance prosecution of this Application in any manner, the Examiner in invited to call Christopher W. Kennerly, attorney for Applicants, at 214.953.6812.

A check in the amount of $110.00 is attached for a one-month extension of time. A check in the amount of $832.00 is also attached for 5 additional independent claims and 24 additional claims total. Applicants believe that no further fees are due. Nonetheless, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 02-0384 of Baker Botts L.L.P.

Respectfully submitted,

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Marked-Up Version of Specification and Claims

For the convenience of the Examiner, the following mark-ups reflect changes to the specification and the claims.

In the Specification:

The paragraph on page 1 under the "Related Applications" heading is effectively amended as follows:

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Serial No. 09/092,348, filed June 5, 1998, pending. This application is related to U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,722, entitled, "**[SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR CREATING AN OBJECT WORKSPACE,]** System and Method for Creating an Object Workspace;" U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,265, entitled, "**[SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR IMPLEMENTING OBJECT WORKSPACE AGENTS IN A DECISION SUPPORT ENVIRONMENT,]** System and Method for Remotely Accessing Data;" U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,264, entitled, "**[WORKFLOW COMMUNICATION,]** Workflow Communication;" U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,333, entitled, "**[WORKFLOW SYNCHRONIZATION,]** Workflow Synchronization;" U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,342, entitled, "**[IMPROVED METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR PROVIDING CLIENT CALLBACKS THROUGH A FIREWALL WITHIN AND BETWEEN ENTERPRISES,]** System and Method for Notification Through a Firewall;" U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/154,661, entitled, "**[OBJECT-ORIENTED WORKFLOW FOR ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION,]** Object-Oriented Workflow for Enterprise Collaboration;" and U.S. Patent Application Serial No. [_____] 09/156,434, entitled, "**[EXEMPLAR WORKFLOW USED IN THE DESIGN AND DEPLOYMENT OF A WORKFLOW FOR ENTERPRISE COLLABORATION,]** Exemplar Workflow Used in the Design and Deployment of a Workflow for Multi-Enterprise Collaboration;" all filed September 18, 1998, the disclosures of which are incorporated **[herein]** by reference **herein**.

The following paragraph on page 39 beginning at line 9 under the "Collaboration Management" heading is effectively amended as follows:

The present invention **[manages]** **may provide for management of** collaborations within and between enterprises. Generally described, the present invention **may** provide**[s]** a computer-implemented process for managing workflows and collaborations distributed between nodes of one or more enterprises. The computer-implemented process manages a collaboration by storing a set of predefined functions for the collaboration to be performed at the distributed nodes. The computer-implemented process automatically interacts with the collaboration at each of the nodes to perform the predefined functions. As used herein, "each" means **[each of]** at least a subset of the identified items. The computer-implemented process may be a high-level collaboration generated and processed by the global collaboration designer and the global collaboration manager as previously described in connection with other collaborations of the system or other suitable process capable of managing a collaboration across multiple nodes. The predefined functions may be functions for generating, deploying, monitoring, or otherwise interacting with a collaboration.

In the Claims:

The claims are amended as follows:

1. **(Amended)** A computer-implemented process for managing a distributed **[work flow, comprising;]** **workflow, operable to:**

[storing] **store** a set of predefined functions for a **[work flow]** **workflow that are** to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes; **and**

automatically **[interacting]** **interact** with the **[work flow]** **workflow** at each of the distributed nodes to perform the predefined functions.

2. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 1, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to generate a **[work flow]** **workflow** between a plurality of enterprises.

3. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 1, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to transmit data associated with **[the]** operation of the **[work flow]** **workflow** at each of the distributed nodes to a monitoring system.

4. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 1, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to deploy the **[work flow]** **workflow** to the distributed nodes.

5. **(Amended)** A **[Computer]** **computer-**implemented process for generating a collaboration between a plurality of enterprises, **[comprising]** **operable to**:

[receiving] **receive** a preliminary collaboration from a first enterprise;

automatically **[transmitting]** **transmit** the preliminary collaboration **from the computer-implemented process** to a predefined second enterprise for review;

[receiving] **receive** a response to the preliminary collaboration from the second enterprise; **[and]**

automatically **[transmitting]** **transmit** the response **of the second enterprise from the computer-implemented process** to the first enterprise for review; **and**

receive a response to the response of the second enterprise from the first enterprise, the responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first and second enterprises.

6. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 5, wherein the response **[is]** **of the first enterprise comprises** a comment **[to]** **on** the preliminary collaboration.

7. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 5, wherein the response **[is]** **of the first enterprise comprises** a modification of the preliminary collaboration.

Claims 8 and 9 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

10. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 5, further **[comprising]** **operable to**;

[receiving] **receive** an approval from **each of** the first and second enterprises for a collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and **reflecting** the **[response]** **responses of the first and second enterprises**;

subsequent to receiving the approvals from the first and second enterprises, automatically **[transmitting]** **transmit** the collaboration **from the computer-implemented process** to a predefined third enterprise for review;

[receiving] **receive** a response to the collaboration from the third enterprise; **[and]**

automatically **[transmitting]** **transmit** the response **of the third enterprise from the computer-implemented process** to the first **[enterprise]** **and second enterprises** for review**; and**

receive responses to the response of the third enterprise from the first and second enterprises, the responses of the first, second, and third enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises.

11. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 10, wherein the response **[is]** **of the third enterprise comprises** a comment **on the collaboration**.

12. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 10, wherein the response **[is]** **of the third enterprise comprises** a modification to the collaboration.

Claims 13 and 14 are canceled without prejudice or disclaimer.

15. **(Amended)** A computer-implemented process for deploying a collaboration generated by a first enterprise to a plurality of other enterprises, **[comprising] operable to**:

[receiving] receive a final collaboration **approved by first, second, and third enterprises**;

automatically **[transmitting] transmit** a predefined first part of the collaboration **from the computer-implemented process** to a predefined second enterprise **for operation at the second enterprise**; and

automatically **[transmitting] transmit** a predefined second part of the collaboration **from the computer-implemented process** to a predefined third enterprise **for operation at the third enterprise**.

16. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 15, further **[comprising] operable to**:

request**[ing]** an approval from the second enterprise for operation of the first part of the collaboration at a node of the second enterprise; and

request**[ing]** an approval from the third enterprise for operation of the second part of the collaboration at a node of the third enterprise.

17. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 16, **further operable to,** in response to receiving the approval from the second enterprise, **[notifying] notify** the third enterprise of the approval.

18. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 16, **further operable to,** in response to receiving the approvals from the second and third enterprises**,** **[transmitting] transmit** a signal to the second and third enterprises to operate **the first and second parts of** the collaboration**, respectively**.

19. **(Amended)** The process of Claim 16, **further operable to,** in response to receiving approvals to operate the collaboration from all enterprises to which **any part of** the collaboration **[is] was** transmitted, **[transmitting] transmit** a signal to all of the enterprises **to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted** to operate the **corresponding transmitted parts of the** collaboration.

20. **(Amended)** A computer-implemented process for monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises, **[comprising] operable to**:

[automatically querying a first node of a first enterprise for a first predefined set of data associated with the operation of the collaboration at the first node] receive a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data;

[transmitting] automatically transmit the first set of data **from the computer-implemented process** to a monitoring system in response to the querying of the first node;

[automatically querying a second node of a second enterprise for a predefined second set of data associated with an operation of the collaboration at the second node] receive a second predefined set of data associated with operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise, the second set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the second node for the second set of data; and

[transmitting] automatically transmit the second set of data **from the computer-implemented process** to the monitoring system **in response to the querying of the second node**.

—21. **(New)** A method of managing a distributed workflow using an intermediary computer system, comprising:

using the intermediary computer system, storing a set of predefined functions for a workflow that are to be performed at a plurality of distributed nodes; and

using the computer intermediary system, automatically interacting with the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to perform the predefined functions.

22. **(New)** The method of Claim 21, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to generate a workflow between a plurality of enterprises.

23. **(New)** The method of Claim 21, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to transmit data associated with operation of the workflow at each of the distributed nodes to a monitoring system.

24. **(New)** The method of Claim 21, wherein the set of predefined functions are operable to deploy the workflow to the distributed nodes.

25. **(New)** A method of generating a collaboration between a plurality of enterprises, comprising:

receiving, at an intermediary computer system, a preliminary collaboration from a first enterprise;

automatically transmitting the preliminary collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined second enterprise for review;

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, a response to the preliminary collaboration from the second enterprise;

automatically transmitting the response of the second enterprise from the intermediary computer system to the first enterprise for review; and

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, a response to the response of the second enterprise from the first enterprise, the responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first and second enterprises.

26. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the response of the first enterprise comprises a comment on the preliminary collaboration.

27. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the response of the first enterprise comprises a modification of the preliminary collaboration.

28. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, further comprising;

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, an approval from each of the first and second enterprises for a collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and the responses from the first and second enterprises;

subsequent to receiving approval from the first and second enterprises, automatically transmitting the collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined third enterprise for review;

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, a response to the collaboration from the third enterprise;

automatically transmitting the response of the third enterprise from the intermediary computer system to the first and second enterprises for review; and

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, responses to the response of the third enterprise from the first and second enterprises, the responses of the first, second, and third enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises.

29. **(New)** The method of Claim 28, wherein the response of the third enterprise comprises a comment on the collaboration.

30. **(New)** The method of Claim 28, wherein the response of the third enterprise comprises a modification to the collaboration.

31. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein automatically transmitting the preliminary collaboration comprises transmitting the preliminary collaboration according to a predefined function carried out by the intermediary computer system.

32. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein automatically transmitting a response to an enterprise comprises transmitting the response according to a predefined function carried out by the intermediary computer system.

33. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the responses of the first and second enterprises are made according to corresponding privileges specifying one or more types of responses the first and second enterprises are allowed to make, at least one type of allowed response for the first enterprise being different from at least one type of allowed response for the second enterprise.

34. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, further comprising:

automatically transmitting the preliminary collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined third enterprise for review;

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, a response to the preliminary collaboration from the third enterprise;

automatically transmitting the response of the third enterprise from the intermediary computer system to the first and second enterprises for review; and

receive responses to the response of the third enterprise from the first and second enterprises, the responses of the first, second, and third enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first, second, and third enterprises.

35. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein the first and second enterprises are in a first group of enterprises and the method further comprises:

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, approval for the collaboration from all enterprises in the first group; and

subsequent to receiving approval for the collaboration from all enterprises in the first group, automatically transmitting the collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined second group of one or more enterprises for review.

36. **(New)** The method of Claim 35, wherein:

the responses of the enterprises in the first group are made according to corresponding first privileges specifying one or more types of responses the enterprises in the first group are allowed to make;

the responses of the enterprises in the second group are made according to corresponding second privileges specifying one or more types of responses the enterprises in the second group are allowed to make; and

the first privileges specify a greater number of types of responses than the second privileges.

37. **(New)** The method of Claim 25, wherein:

the preliminary collaboration is an outline for a more specific collaboration between the first and second enterprises;

the reviews and responses by the first and second enterprises comprise a general stage of collaboration design; and

a specific stage of collaboration design following the general stage comprises reviews and responses by the first and second enterprises of details of the more specific collaboration.

38. **(New)** A method of deploying a collaboration generated by a first enterprise to a plurality of other enterprises, comprising:

receiving, at an intermediary computer system, a final collaboration approved by the first enterprise, a predefined second enterprise, and a predefined third enterprise;

automatically transmitting a predefined first part of the collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined second enterprise for operation at the second enterprise; and

automatically transmitting a predefined second part of the collaboration from the intermediary computer system to a predefined third enterprise for operation at the third enterprise.

39. **(New)** The method of Claim 38, further comprising:

using the intermediary computer system, requesting approval from the second enterprise for operation of the first part of the collaboration at a node of the second enterprise; and

using the intermediary computer system, requesting approval from the third enterprise for operation of the second part of the collaboration at a node of the third enterprise.

40. **(New)** The method of Claim 39, further comprising, in response to receiving approval from the second enterprise and using the intermediary computer system, notifying the third enterprise of the approval.

41. **(New)** The method of Claim 39, further comprising, in response to receiving approval from the second and third enterprises and using the intermediary computer system, transmitting a signal to the second and third enterprises to operate the first and second parts of the collaboration, respectively.

42. **(New)** The method of Claim 39, further comprising, using the intermediary computer system and in response to receiving approval to operate the collaboration from all enterprises to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted, transmitting a signal to all enterprises to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted to operate the corresponding transmitted parts of the collaboration.

43. **(New)** The method of Claim 42, wherein the collaboration is deployed but not run by any of the enterprises to which any part of the collaboration was transmitted until approval has been received, at the intermediary computer system, from a specified number of these enterprises to avoid prematurely running the collaboration for a subset of these enterprises or prematurely terminating older versions of the collaboration.

44. **(New)** A method of monitoring a collaboration across a plurality of enterprises, comprising:

receiving, at an intermediary computer system, a first predefined set of data associated with operation of a first portion of the collaboration at a first node of a first enterprise, the first set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the first node for the first set of data;

automatically transmitting the first set of data from the intermediary computer system to a monitoring system in response to the query of the first node;

receiving, at the intermediary computer system, a second predefined set of data associated with operation of a second portion of the collaboration at a second node of a second enterprise, the second set of data having been collected in response to an automatic query of the second node for the second set of data; and

automatically transmitting the second set of data from the intermediary computer system to the monitoring system in response to the query of the second node.

45. **(New)** The method of Claim 44, wherein:

the automatic query of the first node is conducted by a first agent operating at the first node; and

the automatic query of the second node is conducted by a second agent operating at the second node.

46. **(New)** The method of Claim 44, wherein:

the automatic transmission of the first set of data is in response to a first predefined event; and

the automatic transmission of the second set of data is in response to a second predefined event.

47. **(New)** The method of Claim 44, further comprising:

automatically querying each of a plurality of nodes of a plurality of enterprises for a plurality of predefined sets of data associated with operation of corresponding portions of the collaboration at the plurality of nodes;

receiving, at an intermediary computer system, the plurality of sets of data from the plurality of nodes; and

automatically transmitting the plurality of sets of data from the computer-implemented process to a monitoring system.

48. **(New)** A system for generating a collaboration between a plurality of enterprises, comprising:

means for receiving a preliminary collaboration from a first enterprise;

means for automatically transmitting the preliminary collaboration to a predefined second enterprise for review;

means for receiving a response to the preliminary collaboration from the second enterprise;

means for automatically transmitting the response of the second enterprise to the first enterprise for review; and

means for receiving a response to the response of the second enterprise from the first enterprise, the responses of the first and second enterprises ultimately resulting in a final collaboration based on the preliminary collaboration and optimized for the first and second enterprises.—